

Amendments to the Claims:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Canceled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (canceled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Applicant reserves the right to pursue any canceled claims at a later date.

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.-16. (canceled)

17. (currently amended) A method for operating a fuel cell system, comprising:  
supplying a process gas to the fuel cell system via a liquid ring pump, wherein impurities  
contained in the process gas are removed by an operating liquid of the liquid ring pump;  
monitoring a contamination with the impurities of the operating liquid, wherein the  
contamination of the operating liquid is monitored by measuring the conductivity of the  
operating liquid;  
interrupting an operation of a fuel cell block of the fuel cell system when a contamination  
upper limit of the of the operating liquid is exceeded;  
exchanging the operating liquid or purifying the operating liquid via a purifying device  
when a contamination lower limit value of the operating liquid is exceeded,  
wherein a component flow of the operating liquid is transmitted via the purifying device,  
and  
~~The method as claimed in claim 16, wherein the purifying device includes an ion~~  
~~exchanger.~~

18. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 17, wherein the operating liquid is cooled via a heat exchanger prior to transmission to the purifying device.

19. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 18, wherein [[the]] an operating capability of the purifying device is monitored.

20. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 19, further comprising: regenerating the purifying device and performing a switchover to a second purifying device or interrupting the operation of the fuel cell block of the fuel cell system when an inadequate purifying efficiency threshold of the purifying device is reached.

21. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 20, wherein the operating liquid simultaneously functions as cooling water for the fuel cell system.

22. (currently amended) A fuel cell system, comprising:  
a feed line that transmits a process gas;  
a liquid ring pump connected to the feed line that ~~compressing~~compresses the process gas;  
[[and]] an operating liquid that purifies the process gas from impurities; and  
a monitoring device that monitors [[the]] a contamination with the impurities of the operating liquid, and  
a purifying device comprising an ion exchanger for reducing the impurities of the operating liquid,  
wherein a signal is output when an upper limit value of the impurities in the operating liquid is exceeded.

23. (currently amended) A method for operating a fuel cell system, comprising:

passing an intake air through a first filter, wherein the filtered intake air contains a residual contaminant;

mixing the intake air with an operating liquid;

compressing the mixed intake air and operating liquid in a liquid ring pump;

transferring the residual contaminant contained in the compressed intake air to the operating liquid;

separating the operating liquid containing the residual contaminant from the compressed intake air via a liquid separator; [[and]]

transmitting the purified and compressed intake air to a fuel cell block of the fuel cell system; and

monitoring a contamination level of the operating liquid.

24. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 23, wherein the compressed intake air contains a plurality of residual contaminants.

25. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 24, wherein the contamination of the operating liquid is monitored by measuring the conductivity of the operating liquid.

26. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 25, further comprising:

interrupting the operation of a fuel cell block of the fuel cell system when a contamination upper limit [[of the]] of the operating liquid is exceeded.

27. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 26, wherein the operating liquid is exchanged or purified via a purifying device when [[a]] an operating liquid contamination lower limit value is exceeded.

28. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 27, wherein the purifying device includes an ion exchanger.

29. (previously presented) The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein the operating liquid is cooled via a heat exchanger prior to transmission to the purifying device.

30. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 29, further comprising the method steps:

monitoring the efficiency of the purifying device,

switching-over to a second purifying device when an inadequate purifying efficiency threshold of the purifying device is reached, and

regenerating the purifying device.

31. (currently amended) The method as claimed in claim 29, further comprising the method steps:

monitoring the efficiency of the purifying device,

interrupting the operation of the fuel cell block of the fuel cell system when an inadequate purifying efficiency threshold of the purifying device is reached, and

regenerating the purifying device.